THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRI BALRAM SINGH YADAV): (a) and (b) The Planning Commission set up an Expert Group on 6th December, 1991 under the Chairmanship of Dr. Jayant Patil, Member (Agriculture) to study the need for strengthening the infrastructure for export of agricultural commodities and processed food. The Expert Group finalised its report and submitted to the Planning Commission on 17th February, 1992.

(c) The Report envisages that the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Commerce and other Central Government Departments and Agencies involved in the export of agro-products should draw an Action Plan making use of this report and prepare guidelines for the exporters and farmers having exportable commodities. Copies of the Report of Expert Group have accordingly been sent to the concerned Ministries/ Departments for taking appropriate action on the recommendations with which they are concerned. However, a number of measures are being taken by the respective Ministries for strengthening infrastructure for export of agro products. These include management of post harvest infrastructure of horticulture crops, development of market infrastructure through soft loan, assistance for purchase of specialised transport units for meat, horticulture and floriculture sector, assistance to exporters/producers, growers/co-operative organisations and federations for establishing pre-cooling facilities, setting up of mechanised post harvest handling facilities and sheds for grading, sorting, quality control and packaging, establishing Vapour Heat Treatment/ fumigation/screening machines for exports and establishing cold stores at ports/sea ports for export purposes, assistance for creation of infrastructure facilities for fruits and vegetable processing, preservation and processing of fish and meat and meat products.

Piling up Stocks of Sugar

*152. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that stocks of sugar have been piled up in the sugar factories of Maharashtra leading to acute shortage of funds resulting in non-clearance of payment of sugarcane prices to the farmers causing unrest among them;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the remedial action taken or proposed to be taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD (SHRI AJIT SINGH): (a) and (b) On the basis of the available information furnished by sugar factories, the closing stocks of sugar for the week ending 7th February, 1996 during the season 1995-96 in respect of sugar factories in the State of Maharashtra were 27.71 lakh tonnes as against 20.50 lakh tonnes during the corresponding period of the previous season, 1994-95.

The arrears of sugarcane price relating to the season 1995-96 as on 31.1.1996 of the sugar factories of Maharashtra State were Rs. 99.11 crores as against Rs. 102.66 crores on the corresponding date of the last season, 1994-95.

(c) With a view to mitigating the cash and credit crunch being faced by the Sugar industry due to increase in stocks and to enable the generation of additional funds, the following measures have been taken:—

(i) Increase in the monthly freesale quota.

(ii) Enhancement of levy sugar quota to 3.69 lakh tonnes per month on the basis of the population as per 1991 census, w.e.f. January, 1996.

(iii) Announcement of quota for export of sugar to the extent of 6.5 lakh tonnes.

(iv) Creation of a buffer stock of 5 lakh tonnes of freesale sugar for a period of one year w.e.f. 10.1.1996. The carrying cost thereof, i.e., interest, storage and insurance charges, would be reimbursed out of the Sugar Development Fund.

Setting-up Labour Norms for Developing Countries

*153. SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:
SHRI ANANTRAY
DEVSHANKER DAVE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that developed countries are setting-up labour norms for developing countries with a view to curb the imports from developing countries to developed countries;

(b) if so, the facts and measures taken by Government to counter the strategy of developed countries; and

(c) the countries which have not signed or ratified the final draft treaty of GATT?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) and (b) No, Sir. However, some developed countries tried to include the relationship between international trade and internationally accepted labour standards in the final run to the conclusion of the Uruguay Round. India, along with other interested countries, successfully opposed this move.

(c) As on February, 1996, 119 Members have acceded to the WTO Agreement. The following other countries have signed the Agreement but not yet ratified it;

Angola, Congo, Niger, Zaire, Chad, United Arab Emirates and Papua New Guinea.

The following countries have ot yet signed the Agreement but being Least Developed Countries (LDCs) can do so by 31.12.1996: Gambia, Rwanda and Solomon Islands.

Trade gap during the years 1994 and 1995

*154. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:
SHRI MOOLCHAND MEENA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to the answer to Unstarred Question 68 given in the Rajya Sabha on 27th November, 1995 and state:

(a) the trade gap in terms of rupees and dollars during the year 1994 and 1995;

(b) the inter-annual change for this period; and

(c) the inter-annual rate of growth of imports and exports during the same period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c) Foreign Trade Statistics of India are compiled on financial year (April—March) basis. Trade deficit during 1993-94 and 1994-95 and the growth rate of imports and exports in 1993-94 and 1994-95 are as under:—

	Trade Deficit	
	Rs. crores	US $ Million
1993-94	3350	1069
1994-95	7297	2324

	Growth Rate (in percentage)	
	Exports	Imports
	Rs. terms	
1993-94	29.9	15.3
1994-95	18.4	21.8
	US $ terms	
1993-94	20.0	6.5
1994-95	18.4	22.9